



City of San Diego  
Development Services Department  
**Plan Review Division**  
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## Building Newsletter 3-9

### Water Heater Installations

Interpretations of State and Local Building Codes  
1994 Uniform Building Code: Chapter 3  
Revision Date: January 1996

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#### I. Installation in Residential Garages

Domestic water heaters having standing pilot lights and burners or electrical heating elements and switches can ignite flammable vapors that may accumulate near floor level. Section 510 of the Uniform Plumbing Code permits such water heaters to be installed in residential garages provided that the ignition sources are at least 18 inches above the floor level.

For purposes of simplification, this department requires that both new and replacement water heaters be mounted on 18-inch-high platforms with the following exceptions:

- A. Where water heaters are enclosed in separate, approved compartments having access only from outside the garage and where required combustion air is taken from outside the garage, installation may be at floor level.
- B. Fuel-burning water heaters having sealed combustion chambers need not be elevated.

When supported on the ground, water heaters must rest on level concrete or other approved base extending not less than three inches above adjacent ground level.

Section 510 also specifies that water heaters must be anchored or strapped to resist horizontal seismic forces.

#### II. Permit Requirements

All original and replacement water heater installations are required to be inspected by this department to ensure safe operation. Plumbing and Gas Permits are issued for that purpose.

Where a water heater has been installed on an emergency basis without a permit, a permit must be obtained on the first work day following the installation. Otherwise, a double fee permit penalty will be imposed for doing work without a permit.